

UPDATE: State of Emergency in St Catherine North

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ST CATHERINE, Jamaica — Prime Minister Andrew Holness has this morning announced a State of Public Emergency in the St Catherine North police division.

Joint military and police forces were this morning deployed in large numbers to the area.

Holness, appearing alongside National Security Minister Robert Montague; Chief of Defence Staff Major General Rocky Meade; Acting Police Commissioner Clifford Blake; and Justice Minister Delroy Chuck, made the announcement at the Office of the Prime Minister this morning.

Holness said the State of Emergency was effective today and will last initially for 14 days. It was necessary to facilitate enhanced security measures in the area which has been subject to a high level of criminality which has threatened public order, he added.

Reports reaching OBSERVER ONLINE have been that large numbers of military and police personnel were spotted in areas such as Central Village and other sections of Spanish Town, Bog Walk, and Linstead this morning.

Holness said under the enhanced measures, security forces will have the power to search, curtail business operating hours, and detain persons without a warrant.

All persons using any roadway leading into and out of the St Catherine North area will be subject to search. The prime minister said he would address the Parliament at the earliest opportunity on the measure.

Acting Commissioner Clifford Blake said some 48 murders was seen in the division since the start of the year, compared with 30 for the same period last year.

He said the trajectory of murders in the area, which houses the infamous Klansman Gang, indicated a significant escalation in criminal activity. Blake said intelligence also indicated that criminal activity could further escalate due to internal conflict within the Klansman Gang.

The boundaries of the State of Emergency, as announced by Major General Meade, are:

Northern boundary — the parish boundary starting from the intersection of the St Catherine, St Ann and Clarendon parish boundaries and running east towards Garfield Road to the Moneague leg of the North-South Highway, to Guy's Hill square;

Eastern boundary — starting from the parish boundary, running south to Sligoville to the intersection of Highway 2000, to Lakes Pen Road, Port Henderson Road, Salt Pond Road and to Hill Run main road;

Southern boundary — from the Hartland main road to the Hill Run main road;

Western boundary — the parish boundary running south to Ginger Ridge to Blue Hole to Marley Hill to Dover Road and to the intersection of the PJ Patterson Highway and then to the Hartland main road.

Major General Antony Anderson, who takes office as Police Commissioner tomorrow, was also present for the announcement.